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DEFECTIVE CHILDREN: THEIR NEEDS AND THEIR RIGHTS.

THE words of Coleridge,

“A mother is the holiest thing alive,”

found a fitting illustration in an incident to which my attention was recently drawn. A commissioner of the poor met a sad case of ejection. A mother with no roof but a tree between her and a stormy sky had gathered around her six helpless children, one of them a profound idiot. His offer to provide for this one in an asylum for defectives met with an indignant refusal. “Part with that child? I will give up all the others first.” The most helpless is the dearest,—that is the mother-cry we hear so often in our work.

“Two thousand years that cry has been repeated,
And its eternal youth is ever new.”

Yet how little has been done since the Great Physician healed the impotent child and the heart of the sorrowing mother,—since His apostle charged the churches to comfort the feeble-minded. Tradition tells of the good bishop of the fourth century, St. Nicholas of Myra,—still regarded as the patron of children,—who recognized the imbecile and idiot and claimed them as his special wards. Twelve hundred years later St. Vincent de Paul and his *confrères de charité* attempted to ameliorate in some degree the condition of these unfortunates; but it remained for the present century to take the initiative; and, indeed, not until the latter half of it has the work taken definite and organized form. Meanwhile the evil has grown tremendously, and it is important, first of all, that its character be made clear.

The ignorance of the general public in regard to this evil is daily brought home to us and constitutes a serious drawback to our work. On occasions of public addresses, I have been approached for information by persons amazed to learn that

there is any difference between the idiot and imbecile. The idiot is utterly incapable of training except in the simplest matters of self-help; he has no power of speech; in fact, nothing can be done for him save to minister to his physical needs. The imbecile, however,—classified in three grades,—may be trained to become almost self-supporting, and does, under tutelage and direction, fairly creditable work in both industrial and mechanical arts. It is clear, therefore, that the difference between an idiot and an imbecile is even greater than that between an imbecile and a normal child. Indeed, so nearly normal do many of our boys and girls appear that the uninitiated constantly ask why they are in an institution. Why may not this boy, who can make his own coat, draw, paint, play the cornet, make and carve a chair, and perform equally well the office of butler or valet,—why may he not go out into the world and earn a good living? Because, away from the compelling hand, without the constant stimulus of affectionate guardianship, his weak will and indolent nature would at once succumb. Alone, he could never be trusted to compete with normal labor; nor would it be safe to allow his weak moral nature, often absolutely wanting, to contend with the temptations of the world. He would inevitably be pushed to the wall, join the army of tramps, vagrants, and criminals, and help to crowd our almshouses or penitentiaries; and, worse still, he would perpetuate his race.

The world has no place for him. Not understanding him, it will not put up with him or his vagaries. The imbecile, whose training must cover a period four times that of a normal child and who must work under constant supervision, who is childish and wilful, who is often physiologically an old man and psychologically a young child while yet a youth in years, belongs to an abnormal race and must be forever set apart with his own. This is necessary not alone to ensure his only certain success in life, but for the protection of ourselves and our children. Society must be protected, in the first place, from the motiveless acts of the irresponsible which are as pregnant with disaster as premeditated crime and, because unsuspected, far more difficult to evade; and in the second place,

from the contamination of intermarriage. Marriage, which is sometimes contracted ignorantly (abnormally brilliant qualities concealing serious mental defects) but too often knowingly from lust of wealth, position, or social advantage and entered into reckless of consequences, is creating a race in our midst more to be dreaded than any foreign immigration.

What are marriage laws worth that guard so little the sacred precincts of the home? Are we not allowing our much vaunted freedom for the individual to run into a tangled web of license? We hear the frequent assertion of the ignorant or foolish, "I will marry whom I please, and it is no one's business but my own." And, insane, imbecile, or diseased, there is no law to "show just cause or impediment" or to interfere with "this right of the individual." A few years later the inheritor of this same liberty repeats, naturally, the same sentiment: "I will do what I choose and no one dare touch me." And no one does. When, finally, the lawlessness of self-will has destroyed all power of self-control, the atavism of the race encloses its helpless victim. "Freedom which comes too soon—before the individual is ready for it—proves his ruin," as Earl Barnes wisely says, and he becomes the unintentional author of some unpremeditated crime. Then the law, which has permitted all this, steps in and, by way of condoning its own lax guardianship, consigns its unfortunate ward to prison or to death. Is this a protection which protects? No other class of defectives transmit ill with such certainty as the feeble-minded. Unstable nerve centres in one parent seem naturally to attract and coalesce with any weakness or ancestral taint, be it patent or latent, in the other. Disappearing for one or several generations, if modified by pure connection, the atavism still clings, sure to reappear, if not as imbecility, still as insanity, epilepsy, or some one of the varied forms of neurosis. A case in evidence is that of two persons, each apparently of sound mind and pure blood, enjoying every advantage that health, wealth, culture, and position can give; yet their only child is a profound idiot.

I have the record of a family through seven generations, numbering one hundred and twenty-four individuals, showing

forty-two defectives. Another family of eighty individuals, thirty-two of whom are defectives, shows through four generations a continuous stream of idiocy, imbecility, and crime. These are not isolated facts, but types of cases constantly met with in the experience of alienists. Can it be wondered, therefore, that we urge, not only the permanent sequestration, but asexualization of the imbecile as the only reasonable and effectual safeguards against an evil which, in poisoning the springs of society, is attacking the very life-blood of the nation?

There are more imbeciles in our midst than people generally are aware of. They walk our streets and fill our schools. The high-grade imbecile, often abnormally bright, flattered and pushed forward by fond parents and unsuspecting teachers, given a liberty amounting to license for which he is totally unequal, is early placed in a position of trust, from which he quickly passes to a felon's cell or escapes justice and repeats his experience in a foreign land. The low-grade drags his slow length through the primary schools, perhaps, or skulks in by-lanes and alley-ways, and, devoid of purpose or will, he sees no future, nor is he conscious of any law but what the present dictates. Gamin, tramp, a lover of mischief,—the step is easy to unconscious crime; and, without intent, this purposeless being often becomes the chief actor in a tragedy made double when the death penalty is imposed upon such an irresponsible.

I was called upon a short time since to give testimony in a case which enlisted my warmest sympathies,—that of a purely motiveless crime committed by an utterly irresponsible lad with every mark of degeneracy upon him. By the law of Pennsylvania, children over seven years of age found guilty of murder are liable to the death penalty. The public, convinced that there was no insanity and not understanding imbecility, for which, indeed, the law makes no provision, clamored for his conviction. Picture that court-room crowded with curiosity-seekers and horror-mongers. The great doors swing back, and the dwarfed child, with his misshapen head, wiry, unkempt hair, drooping mouth, imbecile leer, and slouching

gait,—guarded by two big officers,—takes his place in the dock. With what simplicity and directness the brave, heart-broken mother tells the story of her own sufferings before the birth of her boy, on whom a fatal inheritance and almost every disease known to childhood had set an ineffaceable seal. Never shall I forget how her appealing eyes hung upon my words, as being all that stood between her and this last most bitter blow. The mother was spared. But one feels that there is no place for the boy in all the world. The deed bars him from school as it does from society, lest by mere association he bring harm to others. He is adjudged *insanus*, or of unsound mind, to save him from the gallows; yet, not being insane, the close confinement of asylum or prison means for him either insanity or a lapse into idiocy. I look at my own boys, happy in their work and play in the glad, free sunshine, and think how any one of them might be in his place to-day were they not shielded and guarded from the possibility of such an ill.

Before considering the remedy for this evil, it may be well to review the work already accomplished. As I have before remarked, work among mental defectives, building on Itard's experiment upon the wild boy of Aveyron in 1801, and carried forward by his pupil Seguin, assumed definite and organized proportions about the middle of the present century, when a general and almost simultaneous movement took place in England, on the continent, and in our own country. Early efforts were naturally directed towards the idiotic or the lowest grade of imbecile with the aim of arousing dormant faculties sufficiently to induce to habits of cleanliness and self-help. The queer, the erratic, the eccentric, were scarcely recognized as abnormal any more than are those destitute of the moral sense, who are often accounted monsters of wickedness, "possessed of the devil," rather than the moral imbeciles they really are. This neglected class has multiplied like dragons' teeth; but the advance made in psychology and education in revealing their needs has also opened up for them new possibilities, causing modification and adaptation of methods and enlarging in every way the sphere of our work.

Thus, from the simplest aim of psychological education—that of awakening and inciting sense-impulses—we have passed to training in such habits of consecutive thinking as will secure the results already alluded to. This, in epitome, is the progress made in fifty years.

We are about to enter upon a new century of work showing greater possibilities and demanding a yet greater advance. Statistics show, in the United States alone, nearly one hundred thousand mental defectives, and of these only about eight thousand are provided for in the twenty-four large institutions now in existence. Many of these institutions are already filled to repletion and, unfortunately, with a large proportion of the idiot or untrainable class. In this respect the English are far wiser than we; for, even with the title of “Homes for Idiotic and Mental Defectives,” they do not admit the idiots into their training schools, but care for them in asylums apart, the economic and moral value of such an arrangement being self-evident.

Not alone from this stand-point will our work require a similar arrangement in the near future. We not only need more space, with entire concentration of energy upon our legitimate work of training, but a new element not included in the last census will soon be pressing for admission. Results of legislation under the compulsory education act show in the city of Philadelphia alone one thousand and twenty-one truants, “children not to be desired in the regular grades.” The committee reports: “There are some children who are mischief-makers in the regular schools, and who are better out than in.” Special schools are to be opened for those who are incorrigible or who need special assistance in study. This is but following similar experiences in England and on the continent based upon corresponding pressing needs. Some of these children, doubtless, are backward from mere physical defects which may be overcome; but a large majority of these “mischief-makers” in the schools will soon be proven “mischief-makers” in society; and, recognized as defectives, they will naturally drift into training schools for the feeble-minded. To receive and train them, and also to care for present demands,

we must be freed from our untrainable population and turn our asylum wards into workshops and school-rooms. The providing of homes for idiots and for epileptics must therefore be the first step in clearing the way for extending the work of training mental defectives; but to this view the public must be educated.

I have said that the training of an abnormal person, especially if not begun early, covers a period four times that of a normal child. Now, with a continuous stream flowing in from the public schools of those who have been tested and proven mental or moral defectives (the necessity of their permanent sequestration having been recognized), our training schools will soon be overcrowded unless there be some outlet for them. And just here we come face to face with the great question of the future and the unsolved problem of the past,—a question asked of us every day, "For what are you training the imbecile? What place can be found for this child who never grows up?"

Society must be protected from pollution and tragedy on the one hand, and on the other the innocent imbecile must be saved from punishment for heedless or reckless transgression for which he is absolutely irresponsible. The interests of both therefore demand permanent sequestration. But where, and how? A way must be prepared for the crisis which even another decade may force upon us. The Spartans recognized this law of self-protection, and, being forced by their circumscribed limits to choose the lesser evil as the greater mercy, they sacrificed the weak for the strong and put to death their defectives in early infancy in order to protect the integrity of the state. We, with our broad territory, are able to meet the same issue in a more humane way; but with us also a national need can be met only by a national provision. The government is caring for the deaf-mute, the Indian, and the negro; then why shall it not care for this race which is at once more helpless and more aggressive, which is incapable of self-preservation and fast becoming a standing peril to the nation? The unoccupied lands of the great West, or the undeveloped portions of the Atlantic seaboard, give free space and oppor-

tunity for permanent sequestration under happiest conditions. Colonized there under wisely ordered provisions, protected from society and society protected from him, safe from the temptations of a world which does not understand him any more than he understands it, the imbecile would be given his freedom under law, and a true junior republic might be established for these grown-up children of the nation.

The axiom "give a man his work and he need ask nothing else of life" applies even more to the abnormal than to the normal. A dilettante existence for the former means retrogression. The continuous stimulus of quiet, congenial occupation constitutes his only true mental and moral life. For this, as well as for economic reasons, it would be well if all the needs of such a colony were supplied within its own limits, which would be not only a direct but a reflex benefit, as it would give a definite aim to the training in the various state institutions which would then be called upon to supply trained workers for various positions. This is no optimistic view, but one founded upon practical experience. Only a year ago we sent out a colony of one hundred and fifty trained workers to a new institution, and the physician in charge assures me he does not know how he would have managed with only new and untrained children. As it was, our boys and girls went to work with a will, leading even the employees of the institution, and thus clearly and practically demonstrated the greater possibilities of success in enlarged experiment.

Contrast such a community of happy, busy folk, protected from possibility of crime and obloquy, with this picture, described in the *Woman's Tribune*. "The American Siberia has a new chapter added, in the leasing of four hundred and thirty men, women and children prisoners at Albion, Florida, to the four contractors making the highest bids for them. These convicts have been leased for a year, and for that time they are the actual property of the contractors, and may be sub-leased by them. They will work in the phosphate and turpentine camps and at road-making. The condition of these camps whenever they have been investigated rivals the horrors that

rend our souls when they are perpetrated by other nations in foreign lands." There can be no doubt that many, if not all, of these men, women, and children are mental and moral degenerates.

Rapid as has been the advance in our work, it has not kept pace with the appalling increase of imbeciles. This is owing in great measure to a misapprehension of the evil, an ignorance of its cause, and a consequent indifference to its tremendous effects. Points, therefore, which should commend themselves to the thoughtful consideration of every humanitarian association and which for the common welfare need to be thoroughly ventilated, are,—

1. Education of the public as to the dominating power of heredity, and the hopelessness, except by heroic means, of escape from atavism.

2. The enactment of laws preventing the marriage of defectives or of their immediate descendants. This should be coupled with such stringent measures for the imbecile as are dictated by science and have already been proven by experience. Such measures, resorted to early in infancy, will not only protect society, but release the unfortunate both from the slavery of his own passions and from the bondage of a keeper, and insure greater happiness with increased freedom of intercourse between associates of the same community, without that strict surveillance now absolutely required in all of our institutions.

3. Early recognition of defective and separation of trainable from untrainable cases with suitable and distinct provision for each.

4. National provision for the permanent sequestration of the imbecile under such conditions, dictated by moral and economic considerations, as shall be best conducive to the happiness of the individual and to the safety of the community.

I have given no mere opinions, but convictions founded upon a living experience. Apart from the demands of family ties, I have consecrated my best energies to this work. For twelve years, in a training school numbering over a thousand,

I have eaten and drunk, walked and slept with the imbecile, and here and in Europe I have personally examined over five thousand cases. I know what society has to fear from the imbecile. I also know his needs and his rights and the protection he demands at our hands; and I therefore make my appeal in behalf of those whom the French have so touchingly named *Les Enfants du bon Dieu*.

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PENNSYLVANIA TRAINING SCHOOL FOR
FEEBLE-MINDED CHILDREN.

SIDGWICK AND SCHOPENHAUER ON THE FOUNDATION OF MORALITY.

PROFESSOR HENRY SIDGWICK in his "Methods of Ethics" lays down three abstract moral principles, which he regards as self-evident. The first of these principles is that "if a kind of conduct that is right (or wrong) for me is not right (or wrong) for some one else, it must be on the ground of some difference between the two cases, other than the fact that he and I are different persons."

Let us take an easy instance of the application of this principle and see how it defends our moral judgments against the perverting influence of passion and self-interest. We have an excellent case in point in the interview between Nathan and David described in the second book of Samuel. David severely condemned the conduct of the imaginary rich man who seized the poor man's only ewe lamb, but, perverted by passion and egoism, he had failed to condemn the heinousness of his own similar conduct. He had thought himself justified in doing an act of a kind that he could not approve when done by another, and the result was an infraction of the moral law. In Kantian language he had acted on a maxim that he could not will to be law universal. Nathan helped him to arrive at a correct judgment in his own case by inducing him to give judgment on an imaginary third person,